



Tip Sheet 5: Vermicomposting: Composting Inside with Worms



What is Vermicomposting?

Vermicomposting is a way to compost fruit and vegetable scraps indoors or if you don't have a big yard or garden to set up a compost bin. All you need to make your own worm bin are special worms called red wigglers (*Eisenia fetida*), fruit and vegetable scraps, newspaper, and a closed container.



What Do You Need to Start Your Worm Bin?

- Opaque (not see through or not transparent) plastic container at least 12" x 12" x 12" with a secure lid.
- Window screen/mesh
- Duct tape or glue gun
- Scissors, box cutter, or drill with 1/4 drill bit
- Red wiggler worms, specifically *Eisenia fetida*
- Newspaper for bedding
- Fruit and vegetable scraps
- Water

Starting Your Worm Bin

1

Make your worm bin.

Red wigglers, *Eisenia fetida*, are living organisms that need air. Create air holes for your worm bin by using either the drill, scissors, or a box cutter to make 15-20 holes in the lid. Secure the window screen/mesh onto the lid with tape or hot glue to ensure the screen or mesh covers all the holes.

2

Add bedding and food scraps into your worm bin.

Bedding acts as furniture for your worm bin. It provides a place for the worms to live and reproduce, absorbs excess moisture, and covers your food scraps to prevent odors. Bedding can be made from different materials, but torn newspaper is the most common.

Tear non-glossy newspaper into one (1)-inch-wide strips.

The strips can be as long as the length of the newspaper. Wet the strips of newspaper with water and squeeze out any excess moisture. Wet newspaper strips should be the consistency of a wrung-out sponge and should glisten but not drip. Fill the bin two-thirds full of bedding. Use your hands to fluff up and separate the bedding.

Add food scraps into your worm bin.

Move the bedding completely to one side and add your food scraps to the side without the paper strips. You can add up to 3 to 4 pounds of chopped food scraps into your worm bin every week. Chopping the food scraps into smaller pieces (2 to 3-inch pieces), will help the worms feed on the scraps. Once you add the food scraps, cover them with a two to three-inch layer of the moistened newspaper strips that were moved to the side.

3

Add your worms into their new home.

It's now time to add your worms into their new home. Gently place worms on top of the moistened newspaper strips. They will slowly move their way down to the food on their own.





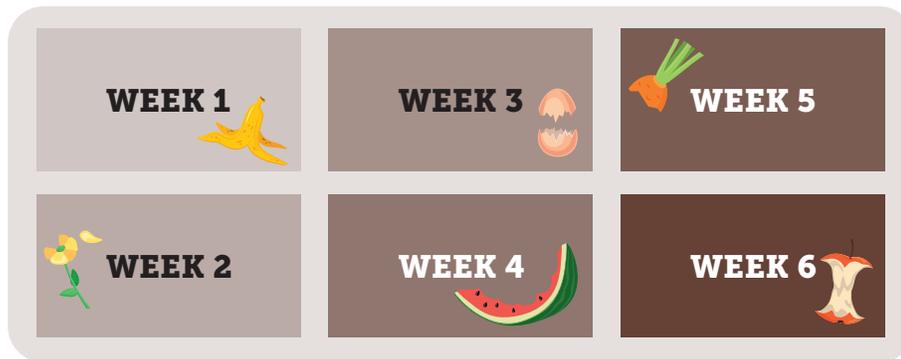
Where to Keep Your Worms?

The best place to store your worm bin is indoors. Worms prefer temperatures between 55°F and 80°F (13°C and 27°C).



How Often and How Much Should You Feed Your Worms?

Feed your worms once a week with 3 to 4 pounds of chopped fruit and vegetable scraps. Rotate the foods scraps throughout your bin so that you aren't adding food scraps in the same place week after week. You can follow the diagram below.



After week 6, start over at the first location (week 1). If you find that there is still a lot of undecomposed food scraps in the first location after 6 weeks, then you might be over feeding your worms. Store food scraps in the freezer or refrigerator and wait a week before adding more materials.



What are the Acceptable Materials to Include in a Worm Bin?

- Fruit and vegetable scraps (cores, skins, seeds, leaves, husks, rinds, etc.). Remove stickers from fruits and vegetables.
- Egg shells
- Coffee grounds and paper coffee filters
- Tea leaves and tea bags
- Non-coated paper (shredded newspaper or cardboard)



Harvesting Your Vermicompost or Worm Castings

After a few weeks, the food scraps and bedding are made into worm castings, otherwise known as vermicompost. Remove three-quarters of the material for use in your garden or potted plants (mix into the soil).

Don't get rid of the worms! Use a hand-held screen to sift or separate the worms from the vermicompost and return them to the worm bin to make more vermicompost.

Another way to remove the worm castings is to push all of the material to one half of the container when most of the food scraps and newspaper has broken down, and then add fresh, dampened bedding to the empty side of the worm bin. Add more chopped fruit and vegetable scraps, but only to the side with the new bedding. After about one month, the worms will have finished any remaining food scraps and most will have migrated from the side with the finished vermicompost to the side of the container with the new bedding.

You can now harvest your vermicompost and use as above. Always replace any vermicompost or bedding material removed with fresh bedding material.



For More Information

[MontgomeryCountyMD.gov/RecycleRight](https://montgomerycountymd.gov/RecycleRight) | 311 or 240-777-0311



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